

Report to the Public



The Metropolitan King County Council

Regional Agenda 2003



King County

Working for You

Every time you ride the bus, cast a ballot, or eat safely in a restaurant, you're using a service provided by King County government. Yet we sometimes hear people say they don't know just what King County does, much less the role played by the Metropolitan King County Council. King County is often called the "invisible government."

As the legislative branch of county government, your County Council sets policies, enacts laws, and adopts budgets that govern the services delivered to 1.7 million people in King County. From Metro Transit bus service and wastewater treatment, to restaurant inspections and public safety, you may be surprised to learn how many of the services upon which you depend every day are provided by King County government.

By taking a close look at all legislation, the King County Council seeks out the most efficient and cost-effective delivery of those services and the wisest use of your hard-earned tax dollars. This level of oversight contributes to the fiscal control and accountability that has led to King County's top ratings in the financial markets.

To help keep you informed, we hold public forums and town meetings; cablecast and webcast all of our public meetings; maintain websites for the Council and each individual councilmember; make all pending legislation and committee reports available online via the "Legisearch" system; and publish a Council brochure and district newsletters.

This report is part of that effort to keep you informed. It provides an overview of our regional responsibilities and some examples of how our government oversight works in practice. We hope it will help you evaluate the return you receive from your Metropolitan King County Council.

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King County

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20 Questions

What are the top challenges facing the King County Council?

King County is the regional government for all 1.7 million people who live in the county, and the local government for the 350,000 residents of the unincorporated areas. The Metropolitan King County Council makes policy choices and program decisions that significantly affect all our lives, in such areas as transportation, wastewater, criminal justice, land use and public health.

Here is a look at some of the issues and challenges that Councilmembers will address in the months ahead.



King County

Transportation



1. Regional Transportation Investments

Should the Regional Transportation Investment District — consisting of King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties — invest billions of dollars in road and transit improvements in the three-county region?

- If so, how should we raise the necessary revenues?
- How do we equitably invest the money throughout the region?
- Should we build a new bridge across Lake Washington?
- Should we rebuild I-405?
- Should we replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct?
- Should we widen Highway 167 in south King County?

2. Bus Service

How do we continue to operate one of the best transit systems in the nation in a way that keeps fares low, provides excellent service throughout the county, protects the environment, and provides for future needs?

- How do we fairly allocate our bus service hours between residents of Seattle, the Eastside, and south King County?
- How do we integrate Metro Transit service with the new capacity to be provided by the Seattle Monorail and Sound Transit's Link Light Rail?



Public Safety



King County

3. Criminal Justice

How do we control the costs for police, courts, prosecutors and jails — costs that threaten to engulf our entire general fund in the next few years — without compromising public safety?



4. State v. Ridgway

How do we reasonably fund one of the most complex criminal trials in the nation's history in a manner that provides adequate resources for investigation and prosecution, and respects the defendant's right to a fair trial?

5. Sex Offender Housing

How do we respond to and accommodate the state's placement, within the borders of King County, of a transitional housing facility for repeat sex offenders?

6. Emergency Management

How much money should we spend to prepare for a terrorist attack or other catastrophe?

Health and Human Services



King County

7. Human Services

To what extent do we continue to fund regional human service programs, which are not required by state law but which provide a social safety net for the people of King County?

8. Public Health

How much should we invest in public health to address significant new health threats such as SARS, West Nile Virus and bio-terrorism?



Natural Resources and the Environment



King County

9. Growth Management

What changes should we make during the ten-year review of the county's Comprehensive Plan, the basic document governing land use and development in unincorporated King County?

- Should we change the dividing line between what's urban and what's rural?
- How much open space do we want to preserve in the county?
- Should we change how we determine the amount of road infrastructure that is required to support new development?

10. Endangered Species

How should the county do its part to save salmon in the Pacific Northwest?

- How do we rewrite land use and development regulations in environmentally-sensitive areas in a way that balances property rights with the preservation of salmon habitat?



- How do we pay for salmon recovery plans?

11. Open Space

How can we most wisely spend revenues from the Conservation Futures Fund, a dedicated property tax designed to acquire and preserve open space?

12. Parks

How can we ensure the success of a new entrepreneurial business model as the means of preserving our extensive regional parks system?

Utilities



King County

13. Solid Waste

How should we dispose of our garbage after the Cedar Hills landfill closes in 2012 — a choice that will affect our garbage rates for a generation?

- Should we build, own and operate our own multi-million dollar transfer facility to export garbage out of the region, or should we contract with the private sector to provide this service?

14. Brightwater Treatment Plant

How do we provide for our long-term needs to treat the region's wastewater, within our budget and with sensitivity to community concerns and to the environment?

- What level of mitigation funding should we provide to communities affected by siting and construction of the new plant?



- How should we deal with any escalation in cost estimates?

Efficient Government



King County

15. Election Reform

What reforms do we need in our election system?

- How do we restore public confidence in the county's election process, which involves the exercise of our most fundamental democratic rights?
- What investments do we need to make in systems, technology, or personnel to make sure absentee ballots are sent on time and that no voter is disenfranchised?



16. Performance Measures

How do we measure our performance as a government, in order to find efficiencies and improve the delivery of services to county residents?

17. Human Resources

How do we continue to pay competitive salaries and benefits — so that we can attract and retain a professional, motivated workforce — within the context of the county's budget crisis?

18. Capital Construction

How do we balance the need for routine maintenance and long-term capital construction with the critical, short-term needs imposed by our current budget crisis?

Efficient Government



King County

19. Revenues

Should we make use of the authority given us by the 2003 State Legislature to ask voters to increase either the sales tax or property tax?

- If so, how much?
- What should the new revenues be used for?

20. Technology

How much should we spend to take advantage of rapidly-changing technology as a means to improve service delivery to county residents and save money?



Savings And Efficiencies

The public is not well served when their elected leaders “rubber-stamp” legislation that comes before them.

By carefully scrutinizing every ordinance, motion and budget, this Council has identified hundreds of millions of dollars in savings over the course of the past decade. We’ve found operational efficiencies that have changed the way we do business, improved the level of service King County provides, and raised the quality of life that we all enjoy.

What follows are a few examples of how the oversight of the Metropolitan King County Council has saved your tax dollars and helped this government live within its means.



King County

Sewer Rate



King County

The Council eliminated a decade's worth of projected sewer rate increases, and simultaneously made wastewater cleaner.

The Issue:

The Metro wastewater system was created in 1956 to clean up Lake Washington. By the 1990's, Metro faced court-ordered deadlines to build and implement so-called "secondary treatment" sewer facilities, and to stop discharges of untreated wastewater into Lake Union, the Duwamish River, Lake Washington and Puget Sound. The 45-member Metro Council planned a series of significant sewer rate hikes to fund those required improvements.

Council Action:

The Metropolitan King County Council avoided rate increases by cutting the sewer utility's debt costs, cutting staff and operating costs, and improving its bond rating. These sweeping policy and budget choices were implemented within the first two years of the merger of the Metro and King County governments, and included:

- Refinancing up to \$510 million in sewer bonds at lower interest rates to save about \$25 million over 40 years.
- Eliminating 50 contract and management positions from the Water Pollution Control Division by streamlining operations and consolidating functions.
- Adjusting short-term borrowing to increase buying power and fund new projects at lower interest rates.

These actions stabilized sewer bills for the system's 650,000 customers, saving each household more than \$57 per year over the past 10 years. During that time, the County Council has also expanded the wastewater treatment system and added much-needed capacity.

Estimated Savings:

\$184 million in sewer rates over the past decade.

Juvenile Justice

The Council developed new policies that have significantly reduced juvenile crime.



King County

The issue:

Youths under 18 who are convicted of a crime are sent to the county's Youth Service Center. As this juvenile offender population grew and the Youth Center became more crowded, the county faced the need to build a new multi-million dollar facility. In addition, more youths were being arrested and charged with crimes, and more were placed under court-ordered supervision — without any reduction in juvenile crime.

Council Actions:

Rather than simply accept these trends, which would have meant a new Youth Center and more probation officers, the Council required that all governmental elements of the juvenile justice system — the courts, prosecutor, public defender and police — come together to redesign the system. The goal was not just a less costly system, but one where youths did not re-offend.

Through the “Juvenile Justice Operational Master Plan,” the Council required that each agency look at what it was doing, how its work could be improved, and how the agency could help the whole system. The final plan — reviewed and approved by the Council — demonstrates that investments in diversion, treatment, and alternative sanctions are more effective than detention in reducing costs and repeat offenses.

The results: 50 percent fewer youths in detention; 30 percent fewer juvenile criminal charges filed by the prosecutor; and 30 percent fewer youths on probation. King County now incarcerates fewer juveniles than Pierce County, even though it has three times the juvenile population.

This systemic approach has made King County a nationally-recognized model for juvenile justice reform.

Estimated savings:

\$20 million in avoided cost of building a new Youth Service Center and \$5 million in annual operating costs.

Adult Detention



King County

The Council required new policies and practices that reduced jail costs, while still keeping county residents safe.

The issue:

Nearly three-fourths of the county's general fund budget is devoted to criminal justice agencies: the sheriff, the courts, adult and juvenile detention, prosecution, and the public defender. In 2002, the Council recognized that if changes weren't made, these costs would consume the *entire* general fund by 2007 — which would mean the complete elimination of such basic functions as the ability to conduct elections.

Council Actions:

In order to manage this crisis, while still meeting government's basic responsibility to enforce the law and keep the public safe, the Council required the criminal justice system to find efficiencies and develop alternatives to incarceration — thus reducing costs without compromising public safety.

Building on the success of juvenile justice reforms, the Council applied a similar approach to the adult system by requiring agencies to work together and find ways to reduce criminal justice costs. The resulting "Adult Justice Operational Master Plan" analyzed the work of police, courts, prosecutors and jail as one integrated system, rather than as separate parts, and identified the appropriate uses for prevention, treatment and punishment options. Through policy and operational changes, the "Adult Justice Operational Master Plan" has helped reduce the average daily population in the King County Jail by more than 400 inmates per day.

Estimated Savings:

\$6.1 million in the yearly cost of operating the King County Jail.

District Courts



King County

The Council streamlined services and cut overhead by combining nine district court divisions into three.

The issue:

Nine separate King County District Court divisions in various parts of the county heard small claims and such misdemeanor criminal cases as traffic tickets and possession of small amounts of illegal drugs. The creation of municipal courts in newly-incorporated cities had reduced the caseloads of the county's district courts, to the point that some were sitting idle for parts of the week.

Council action:

Working with the Presiding Judge of King County District Court and with the suburban cities, the Council consolidated the nine court districts into three. This move enabled the closure of two under-utilized courthouses and eliminated some duplication of clerical staff. It also allowed for the centralization of some regional court services, such as the popular re-licensing program that enables people driving with a suspended license to pay off their fines and get back their drivers' licenses.

Estimated Savings:

\$1 million every year in District Court operating expenses.

Interest on County Bonds



King County

The Council adopted sound fiscal and money management policies that have ensured favorable bond ratings and low interest rates.

The Issue:

The county finances major construction projects — such as the seismic retrofit of Harborview Medical Center and major road projects — by selling bonds. The county pays interest to the bondholders. If the county's finances are sound, the bonds are a less risky investment and bondholders are willing to accept a lower interest rate.

Sound financial management also allows the county to take advantage of falling interest rates across the financial markets.

Council Action:

The most accurate benchmark of King County's fiscal accountability is the opinion of the financial markets. Moody's has assigned King County's voter-approved bonds its highest AAA rating — one of the few counties in the nation to meet that standard — and Standard & Poor's has rated them at AA+, its second highest rating. This allows King County to continue to borrow money for public construction projects at much lower rates, which saves taxpayers money.

Since 2000 the county has taken advantage of these positive bond ratings, as well as falling interest rates, and has refinanced at a lower interest rate more than \$1 billion worth of long-term bonds.

Estimated Savings:

\$63 million in debt service costs over the life of bonds refinanced since 2000.

Property taxes

The Council took the lead to slow the growth in property taxes.

The Issue:

Property taxes make up 45 percent of the revenues that go into the county's general fund. Historically it was standard practice for the county to ratify annual property tax increases of 106 percent over the previous year, the maximum allowed under state law.

Council Action:

The Council in 1998 held public hearings and signaled its intent not to approve automatic 6 percent increases. Thereafter, the County Executive proposed progressively lower property tax increases, well before voter approval in 2001 of Initiative 747, which limited annual property tax increases to 1 percent.

Estimated savings:

\$85 million in reduced property tax growth since 1998.



King County

State v. Ridgway



King County

The Council has closely scrutinized and reduced budget requests relating to the largest criminal prosecution in King County history.

The Issue:

The Green River serial murder case is the one of the most complex criminal investigations in the nation's history. It involves as many as 49 homicides dating back to 1982, with a vast accumulation of documents and evidence.

In November 2001, Gary Leon Ridgway was arrested and eventually charged with seven of the murders. He is awaiting trial. The financial costs of the ongoing investigation and eventual trial impose a tremendous burden on county resources.

Council Action:

The Council has exercised extensive review of budget requests from the prosecutor, the public defender, and the sheriff. This oversight has signaled to all parties that budget requests associated with this case will not be rubber-stamped, and that all agencies must thoroughly justify their proposed expenditures.

Estimated Savings:
\$925,000 in reductions to budget requests relating to State v. Ridgway.

Transit Costs and Sales Tax



King County

The Council reduced transit overhead expenses, as well as the size of a proposed sales tax increase for transit operations.

The Issue:

Initiative 695 in 1999 reduced funding for Metro Transit by \$100 million per year. To maintain existing service levels, the county had to cut costs and/or find new revenues.

Council Action:

The Council in early 2000 worked collaboratively with the Executive to identify \$14.6 million in annual savings by cutting overhead costs in the county's Department of Transportation — abolishing the entire Transportation Planning Division, eliminating 156 jobs, and refocusing available funds to preserve threatened bus service.

To make up the lost revenue, a proposal before the council would have asked voters to raise the sales tax by 0.3 percent, with funds going to Transit operations and an expanded capital construction program. In September 2000 the Council pared down that proposal and approved a lower 0.2 percent sales tax ballot measure that emphasized preserving service for bus riders. Voters approved the "Yes on Metro" measure in the November general election. The reduction in the proposed sales tax increase saves taxpayers about \$35 million per year.

Estimated Savings:

\$50 million in cuts to operational overhead and reduced sales tax increases.

Human Services



King County

The Council restored human services funding three years in a row, within existing resources.

The Issue:

The county's budget crisis threatens funding for human services, which is not a mandatory county responsibility. For each of the past three years, the county has been faced with potential cuts to human services programs.

Council Actions:

In each of those years, the Council found ways to restore, at least in the short-term, some of the funding to keep a social safety net underneath all King County residents.

- In 2001, the Council restored \$1.3 million in funding for such human services programs as community health clinics, domestic violence and sexual assault prevention, youth and family services, and senior centers.
- In 2002, the Council restored \$1.4 million. While the final budget did not fully restore cuts to human services, the Council worked to develop partnerships with cities to limit hardships on dependent families and individuals.
- In 2003, the Council restored \$3.3 million. In anticipation of a severe budget gap, Councilmembers worked closely with their partners in Seattle and the suburban cities to prioritize human service funding needs. During budget deliberations, the Council found one-time savings in various programs and restored additional funds based on the Human Services Framework Policies the Council adopted in 1999.

A longer-term funding solution remains critical to the continuation of these programs.

Bottom Line:

\$6.1 million in health and human service programs preserved, while meeting our constitutional mandate to write a balanced budget.

Affordable Housing

The Council ensured that many low- and moderate-income families can still find a place to live, at no direct cost to taxpayers.

The Issue:

The high costs of renting or owning a home have made it difficult for many working families to find affordable housing in King County.

Council Action:

The Council directed the development in 1997 of the “Credit Enhancement Program” to provide loan guarantees for real estate developers, including for-profit, non-profit and public housing entities. The loan guarantees reduce the developers’ financing costs on housing projects. Developers agree in return to provide additional units of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families.

Four projects have benefited from this program. Two are in SeaTac and Boulevard Park, owned by the King County Housing Authority. One is the Transit-Oriented Development project known as The Village at Overlake Station in Redmond. Another is the Ellsworth House low-income senior housing on Mercer Island, which is owned by the St. Andrews Housing Group and is the only subsidized housing on Mercer Island.

Bottom Line:

Nearly 5,000 additional units of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families throughout King County, with another 450 units expected over the next five years.



King County

Public Transit



King County

The Council identified efficiencies in Metro Transit operations that put more hours of bus service on the street for riders.

The Issue:

The growth of King County continues to increase demand for public transportation. Metro Transit must meet the needs of both urban and rural riders, while also modernizing its fleet.

Council Actions:

In the ten years since King County assumed responsibility for Metro Transit, the total amount of bus service has increased by 24 percent. Helping fund that increase was \$2.7 million in operating efficiencies the Council identified in a top-to-bottom review of the Transit Division's budget in 1996 — savings that helped create 50,000 more hours of annual bus service.

More recently, the Council identified unspent funds in Metro's 2003 budget and redirected them to pay for more bus service — 20,000 more annual hours in 2003 and an expected 35,000 additional hours by 2007.

The Council also made riding the bus easier by instituting a simplified rate structure that contains a single fare for trips outside of rush hours. By eliminating the two-zone fare for most of the day, Council action enables riders to go anywhere in the Metro Transit system for one price during off-peak hours.

Bottom Line:

70,000 more annual service hours of new bus service since 1996, with an additional 35,000 annual service hours anticipated by 2007.

Transit-Oriented Development



King County

The Council mandated creation of projects that put affordable housing next to existing transit hubs, to increase ridership and help meet growth management targets.

The Issue:

The state Growth Management Act seeks to focus new housing and jobs in existing urban areas, and encourages the use of public transportation and creation of affordable housing to meet those goals.

Council Action:

The Council led the creation and funding of the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) program as part of the 1998 budget, and amended the King County Comprehensive Plan to include policies that support the TOD program.

Transit-Oriented Development is an innovative program that works with the private sector to identify and develop housing and commercial uses near existing transit service, and to provide incentives for residents to ride buses instead of driving cars. TOD brings potential riders closer to transit hubs, rather than encouraging development away from population centers, which requires more roads and more cars for transportation.

Since 1998, the TOD program has completed two projects:

- Metropolitan Place Apartments in Renton — 90 mixed-income apartments built above a Park-and-Ride lot and adjacent to the Renton Transit Center.
- The Village at Overlake Station in Redmond — 308 affordable apartments built above a Park-and-Ride lot near the Microsoft technology corridor.

More projects are under investigation in Burien, Kent, Kirkland, Seattle, Shoreline and unincorporated King County.

Bottom Line:

Affordable housing, increased use of mass transit, and reduced traffic congestion.

Transfer of Development Rights



King County

The Council sharply reduced the need to use property tax dollars for protection of public open space and resource lands.

The issue:

In order to buy lands for open space or protection of natural resources, the county had been using funds generated by the Conservation Futures Trust Fund or allocated from the general fund. The county needed to find ways to preserve open space without having to buy the land outright.

Council action:

To acquire open space while protecting taxpayers, the Council created the “Transfer of Development Rights Program,” a new funding mechanism that does not rely upon property tax revenues.

This program creates a “bank” with which the county buys the development rights on rural lands from owners willing to forego developing their property. Urban developers can pay into the “bank” and in return obtain enhanced development rights on their property, such as relief from height limits or density restrictions. These funds are then used to buy development rights on additional rural lands.

The county preserves the open space area without having to buy the land outright, and — because the value of the development rights is less than the full market value of the property — for a cost less than full price. The rural landowner receives compensation for the “highest and best use” of the property — and the compensation is largely funded by payments from urban developers into the “bank.”

Rural lands eligible for the program include farms, forests, open space, regional trails, and habitat for threatened or endangered species.

More than 1,200 acres of open space and resource lands have been preserved throughout King County since the program began, with an additional 1,000 acres qualified to participate in the program.

Bottom Line:

\$10 million worth of public open space preserved for \$1.7 million.

Public Open Space



King County

The Council has preserved thousands of acres of open space, for the enjoyment of future generations and for the protection of salmon and wildlife habitat.

The Issue:

The Puget Sound area is noted for its natural resources, scenic beauty and recreational opportunities — keys to the region's quality of life and economic vitality. All governments in the region, including King County, must manage the delicate balance between preservation of the environment and the need to accommodate growth and economic development.

Council Action:

The Council has enacted legislation creating innovative mechanisms to encourage the preservation of open space, including:

- The "Public Benefit Rating System," an incentive program that offers reduced taxes for landowners who forego development of their property and voluntarily protect land resources, open space and timber.
- The "Transfer of Development Rights" program, which seeks to preserve rural forested areas. The program creates incentives to encourage residential development in high-density areas where it can best be accommodated by existing infrastructure, rather than in rural areas where the impacts of development would be greater.
- The "Conservation Futures Trust," which dedicates a portion of county property taxes to the acquisition of open space.

Bottom Line:

Preservation of open space, natural resources, wildlife habitat, and enhanced quality of life for residents through protection of the regional environment.

Flexible Budgeting



King County

The Council adopted policies to speed up the funding of major road projects and salmon preservation programs.

The Issue:

Funding for the county's large capital projects, such as the construction of roads and sewers, had historically been allocated on a project-by-project basis. This system did not allow the transfer of funds from a project that was delayed to a project that was "ready to go."

Council Action:

In 1998, the Council implemented "flexible response budgeting" for the Roads Capital Improvement Program, allowing managers to shift money from stalled projects to projects that are ready to proceed. This allows projects to get off the drawing board, speeding up construction of projects to ease congestion at traffic chokepoints. Two such expedited projects are the 140th Avenue S.E. road widening between S.E. Petrovitsky Road and S.E. 197th Street, and the North Sammamish Plateau Access Road, a multi-lane roadway that will connect the busy intersection at Issaquah-Pine Lake Road and Issaquah-Fall City Road to the Issaquah Highlands Town Center and the new Microsoft campus.

The Council extended the idea of flexible budgeting to stormwater and salmon preservation projects. This has sped up construction of much-needed flood prevention and erosion control projects, and enabled the go-ahead on popular community-based projects to improve salmon habitat and water quality.

Bottom Line:

Faster commutes when traffic chokepoints are removed. Faster action towards salmon recovery.

Technology Efficiencies



King County

Council policies have enhanced service to county residents by making better use of technology in county operations.

The Issue:

Citizens demand better services at lower cost. Increased use of technology is one way to meet that demand.

Council Actions:

In recent years the Council has found numerous ways to put technology to use to deliver better services. In its oversight and legislative role, the Council:

- Saved \$14 million in creating the county's Geographic Information System (GIS) computerized mapping system by developed a plan to acquire existing GIS information from other local jurisdictions rather than building a system from scratch.
- Saved an anticipated \$10 million over the next ten years through development of the Law, Safety and Justice Strategic Integration Program, which will allow more than 30 separate criminal justice computer systems to "talk" to one another — eliminating redundant data entry and speeding the apprehension of criminal suspects.
- Cut the county's cell phone bill in half and saved \$337,000 per year by joining with Seattle to bid competitively for a lower rate.
- Put Council agendas, ordinances and legislative reports online through the "Legisearch" system, and put Council meetings online and on cable through CTV, King County Civic Television.
- Created a technology governance process, a new countywide strategic plan for technology, and a new position of Chief Information Officer to promote service development and oversee policymaking, standardization and investments.

Bottom Line:

Improved citizen access to county government, better customer service, and transparency and accountability for decisions.

Jury Duty



King County

The Council avoided a major technology expense while saving citizens unnecessary waiting during jury service.

The Issue:

Citizens summoned to court for jury duty were being required to spend two weeks on call in the jury waiting room, whether or not they were assigned to a trial. This commitment of time caused many to seek release from jury service, diminishing the pool of qualified jurors available to perform this vital function in our system of justice.

Council Action:

King County Superior Court submitted a budget request of \$1.2 million for a new computer system with which to manage its jury pool.

After closer scrutiny, the Council directed the court to develop a system for “two days, one trial,” under which potential jurors are either assigned to a trial within two days or released from duty. This is consistent with state policy, which seeks to minimize the burden of jury service on prospective jurors. The Council also found a more efficient way to allocate court administrative staff and to link the court’s master calendar with the jury selection system.

The Council’s program cost \$100,000 — one-tenth of the original budget request.

The Council also encouraged the use of public transportation by directing the inclusion of a King County Metro bus ticket with each jury summons.

Estimated savings:
\$1.1 million in projected jury pool management costs.

County Office Space



King County

Council oversight ensured prudent spending on county office space.

The Issue:

With 13,000 employees, King County government must continually find the most cost-efficient office space from which to provide public services. County-owned space is more cost-effective than leased space. Several major leases are due to expire in the very near future. The County faces on-going decisions about whether to lease space, how much it should invest in tenant improvements, and whether to develop new county-owned space.

Council Action:

The Council in 1993 initiated a policy that puts the first priority on consolidating county employees in office space owned by the county rather than in leased offices.

The county was recently faced with the 10-year renewal of a lease at the Wells Fargo Center for the administrative offices of Public Health of Seattle & King County. The new lease allows the county to vacate before the end of the lease if county-owned space becomes available. The proposal also called for the county to spend \$360,000 in tenant improvements.

The Council did not want to invest in significant tenant improvements unless the space was going to be occupied for an extended period. Therefore, the Council approved the lease renewal, but restricted the expenditure of any funds for tenant improvements until a strong case is made that the improvements are absolutely necessary.

Estimated savings:

\$360,000 in proposed improvements to leased office space.

Performance Measures



King County

The Council mandated development of better management tools to help assess the performance of county government.

The Issue:

Citizens, managers and decision makers need some way to measure the volume, quality and value of the goods and services that the county provides.

Council Actions:

The Council adopted legislation directing county agencies to develop and implement a comprehensive process called “managing for results.” This process helps determine what goods and services King County should provide, and also establishes a tool called “performance measurement” to assess whether agencies are delivering effective service.

One such program reviewed by the Council will help the public and the county determine whether agencies are accomplishing their mission and goals. Another will determine whether county technology projects are on budget, on time and providing value.

Bottom Line:

County government’s performance will be more visible to the public, and managers and decision makers can better determine how to improve service to county residents.

Regional Governance

Metropolitan King County Councilmembers work on a large number of regional governing bodies whose actions and recommendations touch all areas of public life.

State law requires the participation of King County Councilmembers on many boards in such critical areas as transportation, public health, criminal justice, and other quality of life issues that cross all jurisdictional boundaries.

In other cases, Councilmembers have required their own participation on panels that protect and advance your interests as a resident of King County.

Here is a partial list of the outside boards on which Councilmembers serve, deliberating and voting on critical regional issues that affect your life.



King County

Regional Governance



King County

King County Board of Health

Healthy People, Healthy Communities

Sets countywide public health policies, enacts and enforces countywide health regulations, and carries out other duties of local boards of health as specified in state law.

- Six County Councilmembers serve.
- Meets once a month.

Regional Law, Safety and Justice Council

Protecting the public

Created by state law to bring together regional criminal justice agencies for information sharing and work on unified public safety and justice plans.

- Two County Councilmembers serve, one of whom must be the chair of the Council's Law, Justice and Human Services Committee.
- Meets once a month.

King County Criminal Justice Council

Treating those we can, incarcerating those we must

Intergovernmental policy advisory board developing solutions for criminal justice funding within King County.

- One County Councilmember serves.
- Meets once a month.

District Court Protocol Committee

Oversight for District Court

Interagency planning and coordinating committee on new judicial positions, staffing, technology, and case management for the King County District Courts.

- Two County Councilmembers serve, with one alternate.
- Meets as needed.

Regional Governance



King County

Growth Management Planning Council

Regional strategies to encourage growth, discourage sprawl

Consists of elected officials from King County, Seattle, Bellevue, the Suburban Cities Association and special purpose districts for development and adoption of the Countywide Planning Policies, which serve as a framework for each jurisdiction to develop its own comprehensive plan. The panel recommends amendments to the Countywide Planning Policies to the King County Council.

- Five County Councilmembers serve.
- Meets four to five times a year.

GMPC Executive Committee

- One County Councilmember serves.
- Meets as needed, usually before the regular GMPC Meetings.

Puget Sound Regional Council

Regional Transportation and Growth Management Planning

Studies the impact of growth on King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap Counties and develops strategies to meet the need for transportation infrastructure to accommodate the region's growth.

Transportation Policy Board

- Two County Councilmembers serve, with one alternate.
- Meets once a month.

Executive Board

- One County Councilmember serves, with one alternate.
- Meets once a month.

Growth Management Policy Board

- Two County Councilmembers serve, one of whom is chair of the Council's Growth Management & Unincorporated Areas Committee.
- Meets once a month.

Operations Committee

- One County Councilmember serves.
- Meets once a month.

Regional Governance



King County

Sound Transit

Moving Forward

Funded by voters in 1996 to collect sales tax revenue for planning and construction of a regional system of transit improvements, including Sounder commuter rail, Sounder Express regional bus service, Link light rail, and such other transportation improvements as Park-and-Ride lots, transit centers and direct access freeway ramps.

Sound Transit Board

- Four County Councilmembers serve, each for four-year terms.
- Meets on twice a month.

Sound Transit Finance Committee

- One County Councilmember serves.
- Meets twice a month.

Sound Transit Executive Committee

- Two County Councilmembers serve.
- Meets once a month.

Central Link Oversight Committee

- Four County Councilmembers serve.
- Meets once a month.

Regional Transportation Investment District

A Puget Sound Investment in Transportation

Created by the state Legislature from all the members of the King, Pierce, and Snohomish County Councils to put a bold regional investment in transportation improvements before voters. Council members must choose which projects should be built and how to fund construction. Potential projects include the Alaskan Way Viaduct, the 520 bridge and I-405 expansion.

RTID Planning Committee

- All 13 County Councilmembers serve.
- Meets as needed.

Regional Governance



King County

RTID Planning Committee Executive Board

- Three County Councilmembers serve, with three alternates.
- Meets once a month.

SeaShore Transportation Forum

Providing transportation resources to the north county

Partnership between King County and cities in the north county, for transportation planning and allocation of resources for road and transit improvements.

- One County Councilmember serves a one-year term, with one alternate.
- Meets once a month.

Eastside Transportation Partnership

Bridges and beyond

Partnership between King County and cities on the Eastside for transportation planning and allocation of resources for road and transit improvements.

- Three County Councilmembers serve.
- Meets once a month.

South County Area Transportation Board

Mobility for a growing urban corridor

Subregional mechanism for transportation planning and allocation of resources for road and transit improvement in the south part of the County. With the acronym "SCATBd," commonly known as "Skateboard."

- One County Councilmember serves a two-year term, with one alternate.
- Meets once a month.

Regional Governance



King County

Washington State Association of Counties

Many issues, a single voice

Non-profit, non-partisan organization established under state law and funded by all 39 counties in Washington state to represent them before the State Legislature, the Governor, and state and regulatory agencies.

Board of Directors

- Two County Councilmembers serve, each for four-year terms.
- Meets weekly during the state legislative session.

Legislative Steering Committee

- Four County Councilmembers serve.
- Meets weekly during the state legislative session.

Urban County Caucus

- Three County Councilmembers serve.
- Meets weekly during the state legislative session.

Economic Development Council of Seattle and King County

'Supercharging' the region's economic engine

Public/private partnership aimed at inducing businesses to locate in the region and retaining the businesses already here.

- One County Councilmember serves a two-year term.
- Meets four times a year.

Central Puget Sound Economic Development District

Creating a foundation for economic growth

Develops strategies to create jobs, raise incomes, and foster a stable and diversified economy in King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap Counties. Prepares an annual plan that maintains the region's eligibility for federal infrastructure funding from the Economic Development Administration.

- One County Councilmember serves.
- Meets four times a year.

Regional Governance



King County

Trade Development Alliance

Protecting and building on our shipping legacy

Association of public and private entities with the mission of making King County one of the premier centers in North America for shipping, distribution, and commerce through international marketing and investment.

- Four County Councilmembers serve.
- Meets once a month.

Executive Finance Committee

Prudent investment of your money

Guides and monitors the investment of all county funds, as well as the funds of 92 other jurisdictions in King County — such as school and fire districts. Establishes policies for temporary borrowing between county funds and approves requests for such borrowing.

- One County Councilmember serves.
- Meets once a month.

Cultural Development Authority of King County

The new model for public support of arts, heritage, and historic preservation

Established by King County government as a public development authority to combine the resources and accountability of the public sector with the entrepreneurial spirit of the private sector. Replaces the former King County Office of Cultural Resources.

- Three County Councilmembers serve.
- Meets monthly during the first year of operation; four times a year thereafter.

Regional Governance



King County

Strategic Advisory Council

Preparing for future technology needs

Advises the county's Chief Information Officer in development of long-term strategic objectives for deployment of information technology countywide.

- Two County Councilmembers serve, each for two years or more.
- Meets twice a year.

Government Council on Natural Resources

Protecting endangered species

Established by the Governor for coordination and partnering among government jurisdictions in Washington State for restoration of salmon, steelhead and trout populations.

- Meets as needed.

Puget Sound Action Team

Clean water is everyone's business

Develops a biennial work plan and budget for clean water funds, with 13 members drawn from counties, cities and state agency heads.

- Meets as needed.

Green River Basin Executive Committee

Nurturing South King County's waterway

Advises on policies regulating flood control and drainage on the lower Green River, with participation from King County and the mayors of Auburn, Kent, Renton and Tukwila.

- One County Councilmember serves on the board.
- Meets as needed. Annual meeting is held shortly before County Council begins budget deliberations in October.

Regional Governance



King County

Cedar River Council

A catalyst for fish habitat and water quality

Promotes habitat protection and reduction of flood hazards through implementation of the Cedar River Basin Plan. A partnership of citizens, private non-profits, and local governments that is one of the oldest environmental groups in the county.

- Two County Councilmembers serve.
- Meets once a month.

Watershed Forums and Steering Committees

Locally-based salmon conservation planning and action

Intergovernmental and stakeholder panels that recommend priorities for habitat projects and write salmon conservation plans tailored to local conditions – plans linked to the Puget Sound-wide Salmon Recovery Plan being developed by federal agencies.

Water Resource Inventory Area # 7 – Snohomish Watershed

Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Forum

- One County Councilmember serves.
- Meets every one to two months.

Snoqualmie Watershed Forum

- One County Councilmember serves, with one alternate.
- Meets every two months.

Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) # 8 – Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watersheds

WRIA 8 Steering Committee

- One County Councilmember co-chairs.
- Meets every one to two months.

WRIA 8 Forum

- One County Councilmember serves, with one alternate.
- Meets every one to two months.

Regional Governance



King County

Water Resource Inventory Area #9 – Green/Duwamish/Central Puget Sound Watersheds

WRIA 9 Steering Committee

- One County Councilmember serves.
- Meets every other month.

WRIA 9 Forum

- One County Councilmember serves.
- Meets every other month.

King County Canvassing Board

Protecting your vote

Established by state law to canvass votes in order to certify results of all elections and to resolve any questions related to the legality of the ballot.

- One County Councilmember serves — one who is not up for election.
- Meets as needed for each election.

King County Law Library Board

Without access to information, there is no justice

Governs operation of the King County Law Library and provides legal research materials to the courts, public officials, bar, and private citizens.

- One County Councilmember serves — the Chair of the Council's Law, Justice and Human Services Committee.
- Meets as needed.

Disability Retirement Board

Providing for those who protect us

Acts upon claims for disability from county law enforcement officers and firefighters.

- One County Councilmember serves a two-year term.
- Meets once a month.



King County

Metropolitan King County Council

**King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue, Room 1200
Seattle, WA 98104-3272
(206) 296-1000
(800) 325-6165**

**This booklet is also available on the Council's web site:
www.metrokc.gov/council/mkccpubs.htm**

**The information in this handbook is available in alternate format upon request.
Call (206) 296-1000 or TTY/TDD (206) 296-1024.**

Regional Agenda 2003